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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [IS](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: MUTED NATIONAL STRIKE IN ISRAEL CALLED OFF IN
FIRST DAY

REF: A) 2006 TEL AVIV 4695 B) 2007 TEL AVIV 835 -

NOTAL C) 2007 TEL AVIV 866

¶1. (SBU) The national labor congress Histadrut called off Israel's national strike March 21, less than 24 hours after it began. Numerous public services expected to join the strike did not, and the "land, sea, and air" shutdown that Histadrut contacts had predicted to Labor Reporting Officer was full of exceptions during the short-lived walkout. The quick settlement allowed thousands of free-spending British soccer fans to arrive for a Euro 2008 qualifying match, and some pundits noted that PM Olmert and many Histadrut members are, coincidentally, huge soccer fans. Anger remains that many municipal authority heads responsible for the crisis still remain in office, and it remains unclear how local authorities beset by economic downturns, mismanagement, and corruption will meet future payrolls.

¶2. (SBU) The media reported Olmert complained that Histadrut chairman Eini had become "enamored with this drama" and that Histadrut had no reason to strike. Government officials were quoted as saying that the Government and Histadrut had essentially reached a deal before the strike began that included full payments of missing salaries to all municipal employees, except for a few "problematic" municipalities that had more complex legal issues to resolve. Yedioth Ahronoth, the most widely circulated tabloid in Israel, reported that sources in the Prime Minister's Office believe Eini was forced to stop the strike after learning that he had lost the support of the Labor Court and was in danger of being in contempt of court. Press reports had quoted Eini as blaming the government for "changing their minds" when they were close to an agreement. Both sides reached agreement the afternoon of March 21, and Israeli public sector employees, including transportation sector workers, returned to work on March 22.

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